

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 08371 151020Z

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 AGR-05 COME-00 STR-04 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5368

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ADDIS ABABA 8371

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EPAP ETRD

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL OF FOLGER COFFEE COMPANY MEETS WITH EPMG OFFICIALS
REGARDING COFFEE SUPPLIES

REF: (A) ADDIS 3983; (B) A-76, MAY 12, 1975

1. MELVIN D. STOLLER, TRADING MANAGER FOR THE FOLGER COFFEE COMPANY, VISITED ADDIS FROM JULY 8 TO JULY 11 TO INVESTIGATE THE AVAILABILITY OF JIMMA COFFEE FOR HIS COMPANY. FOLGER HAS BECOME GREATLY CONCERNED ABOUT ETHIOPIA'S RELIABILITY AS A SOURCE OF SUPPLY AS LAST YEAR (1973/74) IT WAS UNABLE TO PURCHASE ADEQUATE QUANTITIES OF JIMMAS OWING TO A SHORT CROP AND THIS YEAR (1974/75), ALTHOUGH THE CROP IS REPORTEDLY VERY GOOD, SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES HAVE NOT BEEN OFFERED AT COMPETITIVE PRICES. FOLGER IS THE MAJOR AMERICAN BUYER OF JIMMAS TAKING ANYWHERE FROM 50-60 PERCENT (APPROXIMATELY 40,000 TONS) OF EXPORTS TO THE US UNDER ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES. STOLLER MET WITH THE MINISTERS OF COMMERCE AND FINANCE, THE GOVERNOR OF THE NATIONAL BANK, THE HEAD OF CUSTOMS, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COFFEE BOARD AND MOST EXPORTERS. STOLLER POINTED OUT IN HIS CONVERSATIONS THAT FOLGER HAD TO BE ASSURED OF ADEQUATE SUPPLIES IF IT WAS TO RETAIN JIMMAS IN ITS BLENDS. IN ALL CASES HE WAS ASSURED THAT APPROPRIATE STEPS WOULD BE TAKEN TO CONTINUE COFFEE SUPPLIES.

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PAGE 02 ADDIS 08371 151020Z

2. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE COFFEE EXPORTER WHO

ORGANIZED STOLLER'S TRIP, STOLLER WAS NOT REASSURED BY HIS VISIT AND REMAINS CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE. APPARENTLY FOLGER HAS RATHER LIMITED STOCKS OF JIMMAS AND WILL BE FORCED INTO A DECISION ABOUT CHANGING ITS BLEND BY SOMETIME THIS FALL UNLESS IT IS ABLE TO BUY IN THE MEANWHILE. HIS VISIT HAS CAUSED A FLURRY OF CONCERN AMONG ETHIOPIAN OFFICIALS AND MAY RESULT IN A RECONSIDERATION OF THE COFFEE EXPORT SURCHARGE. GIVEN THE PREVIOUS ATTITUDE OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE ABOUT THIS ISSUE, HOWEVER, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY MEANINGFUL CHANGES IN THE SURCHARGE WILL RESULT FROM THIS REVIEW. OBVIOUSLY IF FOLGER DECIDES TO DISCONTINUE THE USE OF JIMMAS IT WILL HAVE A VERY SERIOUS IMPACT ON ETHIOPIAN COFFEE SALES TO THE US. THE EMBASSY WILL UNDERLINE ITS CONCERN ABOUT THIS MATTER TO APPROPRIATE EPMG OFFICIALS AS OPPORTUNITIES ARISE.
HUMMEL

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